

Washington State Health Care Authority
Health Care Policy Section
August 18, 2005

Health Information Technology and Electronic Health Records Initiative (SSB 5064)

This 2005 Legislative session the Legislature passed and Governor Gregoire signed Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5064. This bill mandates the development of a strategy for the adoption and use of electronic medical records and health information technologies that are consistent with emerging national standards and promote interoperability of health information systems.

The Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) and the *Health Information Infrastructure Advisory Board (HIIAB)* that is created in the bill is charged with developing this health information and technology strategy. The *HIIAB* is comprised of twelve members appointed by Steve Hill, Administrator of the HCA. These members represent parties as called for in the bill and include consumers, providers, hospitals, health organizations, and among others health information technology experts.

In addition to the *HIIAB* (the board), the HCA is also creating a *Health Information Infrastructure Stakeholder Advisory Committee (HIISAC)* that is intended to provide feedback and in-put to the board. Unlike the board, the *HIISAC* is not limited in its membership and will represent a broad variety of stakeholder groups such as consumers, clinicians, business, payers of health care, employers, health care organizations (hospitals, carriers, long term care facilities), among others.

The HCA and the *HIIAB* must provide an interim report to the Legislature by December of this year and report on the progress of their work. With recommendations a final report will be made to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2006. Through a request for proposal for very specialized health information consulting, the HCA selected William Yasnoff a nationally known health informatics expert to assist the HCA and the board with this project. Yasnoff is a physician and has a PhD in computer science.

HCA has been soliciting nominations for people to serve on the *HIIAB* and *HIISAC* from professional organizations, experts and other sources. Appointments to the board have been a priority, with all twelve board members appointed as of August 18, 2005. Committee member appointments expected to be decided and completed by the first week of September. The board and the committee have a very fast-paced schedule of activities with work ahead of them, and will be chartered for 18 months. Steven Hill has appointed V. Marc Droppert, a Seattle attorney who has served in a number of health care related capacities in his career to include being one of the founders and Chairman of the Foundation for Health Care Quality.

Over the next six months, leading up to the first report in December 2005, the *Board* and *Committee* will become very familiar with the state of health information technology in the country and in Washington State. This initial assessment is expected to provide the foundation for the remaining work that will result in developing a blue print or strategy for the adoption and promotion of health information technology in Washington State to present to the legislature in December of 2006. The first meeting of the *HIIAB* will convene on August 25, 2005 from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Sea-Tac Radisson. The public is welcome to attend. Expanding the adoption and use of state of the art health information technology will help provide higher quality care to Washington State residents, reduce medical errors, coordinate quality care, reduce inefficiency and waste, and assist providers and consumers make better and

timely decisions. For additional information, please contact Richard Onizuka, Director Health Care Policy, Health Care Authority at (360) 923-2820, or Juan Alaniz, Project Manager at (360) 923-2726.